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SUBJECT: BANGLADESH WANTS CONCERTED CLIMATE CHANGE
MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION EFFORTS

REF: DHAKA 350

¶1. The Government of Bangladesh believes both developed and developing countries share responsibility for addressing climate change, according to State Minister for Environment and Forests Dr. Hasan Mahmud, in a meeting with the Ambassador. Mahmud praised President Obama's engagement on climate change and welcomed further U.S. leadership. The State Minister underscored two goals for the UN Climate Change Summit in Copenhagen: inclusion of fast-developing countries in mitigation efforts and allocation of climate change adaptation funds to maximize their human impact. He said that India and China needed to adopt emission caps. The Minister expressed interest in carbon markets and regional clean energy projects. The USAID Mission Director noted that USAID is supporting projects to train potential beneficiaries on carbon credit markets and promote regional energy integration. With a background in environmental science, Dr. Mahmud understands climate change issues well and can serve as a partner for the U.S. on climate change.

TWO KEY CLIMATE CHANGE GOALS

¶2. In an October 4 meeting with the Ambassador and USAID Mission Director, State Minister of Environment and Forest Dr. Hasan Mahmud emphasized the need for developed, fast-developing and least-developed countries (LDCs) to share responsibility for addressing climate change. The Minister praised President Obama's strong statement at the UN Climate Change Summit and personal engagement on climate change issues for helping to build momentum in the lead up to Copenhagen. He noted his positive meeting in September with U.S. Special Envoy for Climate Change Todd Stern and invited Stern to visit Bangladesh before Copenhagen.

¶3. Dr. Mahmud said he was hopeful for a positive outcome in Copenhagen, citing the increasing level of understanding about climate change and the growing consensus that concerted action was necessary. However, he noted two key goals for negotiation: (1) inclusion of fast-developing countries in mitigation efforts, and (2) the preparation of an adaptation package to help least developed countries, such as Bangladesh, adapt to climate change impacts. Mahmud stressed that if China and India did not agree to caps on greenhouse gas emissions, any agreement at Copenhagen would be meaningless. The Minister argued that adaptation funds should be allocated to maximize their human impact. As chair of the 50-member grouping of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) at the Copenhagen summit, Dr. Mahmud said Bangladesh would continue to emphasize the principle of collective responsibility and press for robust mitigation and adaptation efforts.

FORESTRY PROJECTS TO TAP CARBON MARKETS

¶4. Minister Mahmud asked whether the U.S. could help Bangladesh to access carbon markets by training potential local beneficiaries and helping to attract international investment. He explained that "ignorance" about carbon credits was hindering the country's ability to tap into these markets. The USAID Mission Director noted that USAID's Integrated Protected Area Co-management (IPAC) project was planning a seminar in October-November to bring U.S. Forest Service specialists to train government, private sector and civil society stakeholders on how to prepare projects to access carbon credit markets. The seminar would also cover technical and policy issues, such as measurement of carbon sequestration from forests. The IPAC project was also helping local communities surrounding protected areas to participate and benefit from forestry projects.

REGIONAL ENERGY INTEGRATION

¶5. Dr. Mahmud requested help in encouraging international financial institutions to support regional clean energy projects in Bhutan and Nepal to supply Bangladesh's energy market. The Ambassador noted that Indian companies were developing projects in Bhutan for the north India market which faced rising demand and considerable shortfall in generation capacity. He commented that Nepal may hold greater potential and Bangadeshi involvement there could be helpful. He also pointed out that USAID's South Asia Regional Initiative for Energy (SARI/Energy) project was promoting regional integration of energy markets, including gas and power markets.

ADAPTATION TRUST FUND

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¶6. USAID Mission Director Rollins asked how the GOB planned to use its \$150 million multi-donor trust fund for climate change adaptation programs. Dr. Mahmud explained that the government was still working to define how this fund will be used. They will initially focus on defining immediate and short-term adaptation priorities but will take more time to define long-term plans.

COMMENT

¶7. With a background in environmental science, Dr. Mahmud understands climate change issues well and can serve as a partner for the U.S. in climate change negotiations. After six months as State Minister for Foreign Affairs where he was an important Mission contact, Dr. Mahmud moved in July 2009 to the Environment Ministry where the portfolio better fits his expertise. He also served as Prime Minister Hasina's personal assistant and remains close to the Prime Minister, who will lead the Bangladeshi delegation to Copenhagen. As Chair of the LDC grouping in Copenhagen, Bangladesh can potentially play a constructive role in pressing for shared responsibility for mitigation and adaptation programs. Mahmud's categorical assurance that Bangladesh would push to have the fast-growing developing countries to adopt caps is a new and important development.

MORIARTY